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FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE  
INFO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
EU MEMBER STATES IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 053180

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2014  
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SUBJECT: DEATH OF ABU ABBAS

(U) CLASSIFIED BY NEA ASSISTANT SECRETARY BILL BURNS,  
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) PALESTINIAN TERRORIST ABU ABBAS DIED MARCH 8 OF A HEART ATTACK WHILE IN CPA CUSTODY IN BAGHDAD. ABU ABBAS DIRECTED THE HIJACKING OF THE ITALIAN CRUISE SHIP ACHILLE LAURO IN 1985, DURING WHICH AMERICAN CITIZEN LEON KLINGHOFFER, 69 AND WHEELCHAIR-BOUND, WAS KILLED AND HIS BODY DUMPED INTO THE SEA. ON SUNDAY, ABU ABBAS COMPLAINED OF CHEST PAINS AND WENT OF HIS OWN ACCORD TO THE PRISON MEDICAL FACILITY. WHILE THERE HE HAD A HEART ATTACK; EFFORTS TO RESTART HIS HEART WERE UNSUCCESSFUL. AN AUTOPSY IS SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW. ABU ABBAS HAD NOT BEEN INTERROGATED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS PREVIOUS TO HIS ATTACK. HE HAD BEEN IN U.S. CUSTODY SINCE HIS CAPTURE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BAGHDAD ON APRIL 14, 2003.

¶2. (C) DOJ HAS INFORMED THE KLINGHOFFER FAMILY OF ABU ABBAS' DEATH; CONGEN JERUSALEM HAS INFORMED THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY; DOD HAS INFORMED THE ICRC WHICH HAS UNDERTAKEN TO INFORM ABBAS' FAMILY.

¶3. (U) WE HAVE BEEN REFERRING PRESS INQUIRIES TO DOD. FOR YOUR INFORMATION, PROVIDED BELOW ARE THE DOD TALKING POINTS/PRESS GUIDANCE ON THE DEATH OF ABU ABBAS.

BEGIN DOD TALKING POINTS:

-- PALESTINIAN TERRORIST ABU ABBAS, ALSO KNOWN AS MOHMMAND ABBAS, DIED ON MARCH 8, 2004. INITIAL REPORTS INDICATE THAT HE APPARENTLY DIED OF NATURAL CAUSES MEDICAL EFFORTS TO REVIVE HIM WERE UNSUCCESSFUL. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WILL BE PROVIDED AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WILL BE PROVIDED AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. AN AUTOPSY WILL BE PERFORMED.

-- U.S. FORCES HAVE HELD ABBAS SINCE HIS CAPTURE IN BAGHDAD ON APRIL 14, 2003. FOR MANY YEARS, SADDAM HUSSEIN HAD PROVIDED A SAFE HAVEN FOR ABBAS AND THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION HE LED, THE PALESTINE LIBERATION FRONT.

-- ABBAS PLANNED THE 1985 HIJACKING OF THE ITALIAN CRUISE LINER ACHILLE LAURO IN THE EASTER MEDITERRANEAN SEA. IN THE COURSE OF THAT HIJACKING, A WHEELCHAIR-BOUND AMERICAN CITIZEN, LEON KLINGHOFFER, WAS MURDERED.

END DOD TALKING POINTS.

POWELL